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ABSTRACT

The text of the Final Act of the International Conference on the Conservation of Wetlands and Waterfowl is presented in this pamphlet. The conference was convened by the Government of Iran at Ramsar, Iran, January 30 to February 3, 1971, to promote international collaboration in this field. It was sponsored by the International Wildfowl Research Bureau, and co-sponsored by the Food and Agricultural Organization, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Oranization (UNESCO), International Biological Programme, International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, International Council for Bird Preservation, World Wildlife Fund, and Conseil International de la Chasse. Governments officially represented were: Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Federal Repbulic of Germany, India, Iran, Ireland, Jordan, The Netherlands, Pakistan, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and United Kingdom. Eleven recommendations were adopted, five specific to conservation problems in individual countries and six related to pollution and research and investigation. These include oil pollution, pesticides, promotion of wetland research and hunting research, African wetlands, and wetlands and "Man and the Biosphere" program of UNESCO. (BL)

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The Ramsar Conference

This Conference was convened by the Government of Iran. It was sponsored by the International Wildfowl Research Bureau, and co-sponsored by the Food and Agricultural Organization, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, International Biological Programme, International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, International Council for Bird Preservation, World Wildlife Fund, and Conseil International de la Chasse.

Final Act of the International Conference on the Conservation of Wetlands and Waterfowl

Held at Ramsar, Iran, 30 January to 3 February 1971

1. The Imperial Government of Iran, in accordance with recommendations of earlier international meetings on wetlands and waterfowl conservation, convened an International Conference on the Conservation of Wetlands and Waterfowl, with a view to promoting international collaboration in this field.
2. The Conference met at Ramsar, Iran, from 30 January to 3 February 1971.
3. Credentials were received by the Secretariat of the Conference from the Governments of the following States:

Belgium	Iran	Sweden
Denmark	Ireland	Switzerland
Finland	Jordan	Turkey
France	The Netherlands	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Federal Republic of Germany	Pakistan	
India	South Africa	
	Spain	United Kingdom

4. The Governments of the following countries sent Observers to the Conference:

Bulgaria	Hungary	Rumania
Greece	Italy	

5. The following Specialized Agencies of the United Nations sent Observers to the Conference:
   Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO)
   United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
6. The following Non-Governmental Organizations sent Observers to the Conference:
   Conseil International de la Chasse (CIC)
   International Council for Bird Preservation (ICBP)
   International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN)
   International Wildfowl Research Bureau (IWRB)
   Special Committee for the International Biological Programme of the International Council of Scientific Unions (IBP)
   World Wildlife Fund (WWF)
7. The Conference elected Mr. E. Firouz, Head of the Imperial Iranian Delegation, as President of the Conference.
8. The Conference elected as Vice-Presidents, Dr. V. D. Denisov, Head of the Delegation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and Prof. Dr. M.F. Mörzers-Bruyns, Head of the Delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.
9. The Iranian Game and Fish Department and the International Wildfowl Research Bureau (IWRB) provided the Secretariat of the Conference. Prof. G.V.T. Matthews, Director of IWRB, was appointed Rapporteur-General of the Conference.
10. The following Committees were established by the Conference:

Credentials Committee

Mr. S.A. Hejmadi	(India)
Mr. A. Dakhgan	(Jordan)
Dr. L.E. Esping	(Sweden) (acting as Rapporteur)
Dr. A. Schifferli	(Switzerland)

Drafting Committee

Count Cornet d'Elzius (Belgium)
Dr. W. Erz (Federal Republic of Germany)
Dr. M. Nabavi (Iran)
Dr. E.J. Ph. Roberts (The Netherlands)
Prof. Yu. Isakov (USSR)
Rapporteurs: Sir Hugh Elliott (IBP)
Mr. F.G. Nicholls (IUCN)

11. The Conference was deeply impressed by the decision included in the Message sent to it by H.I.M. Mohammad Reza Pahlavi Aryamehr, Shahanshah of Iran, that the Imperial Iranian Government would place one of its wetland ecosystems of special global significance in joint trust with a suitable international agency, such as the United Nations Organization, to conserve and administer for all mankind. The Conference commended this most important precedent to other Governments.
12. The Government of Iran in convening the Conference referred to it the draft of a Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat, which had resulted from an international meeting of experts held at Espoo, Finland, in March 1970. This draft, together with comments of the Governments of France, the Netherlands, Sweden and the USSR concerning it, constituted the basis for discussion by the Conference.
13. On the basis of its deliberations, as recorded in the summary records of its sessions, the Conference prepared and adopted in accordance with its rules of procedure a final text of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, Especially as Waterfowl Habitat, which is appended as Annex I to this Final Act.
14. In the course of discussions on the draft Convention, the Conference agreed that whilst the final text of the Convention does not include an article concerning territorial application, this will not preclude Parties to the Convention indicating at any time to which territories constitutionally associated with them, the Convention shall apply.
15. In approving the final text of the Convention, the Head of the Delegation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics abstained from approving Articles 9 because it contained the provision that only members of the United Nations, the Specialized Agencies, the International Atomic Energy Agency or Parties to the Statute of the International Court of Justice may become Parties to the Convention. His Delegation believed that all countries should have the right to become Parties to the Convention, since this would contribute to the cause of conservation of wetlands and waterfowl, and he noted that birds recognized no boundaries. He expressed the hope that these views will be taken into consideration by governments at the time the Convention is opened for signature.
16. The Representative of UNESCO stated that UNESCO was willing to accept the duties of Depository as specified in the final text of the Convention, subject to final legal clearance by the Organization and subsequent notification of its acceptance to the Imperial Government of Iran.
17. The Representative of IUCN stated that he was authorized to accept on behalf of IUCN the bureau duties specified in the final text of the Convention.
18. The Conference invited the Imperial Government of Iran to take the necessary steps to prepare the final document containing the English, French, German and Russian texts of the Convention and, after submission for verification to the Governments represented at this Conference, to open the Convention for signature at a convenient date.
19. During the course of discussion of the draft Convention the Conference decided to note the following points:
    a) The waterfowl referred to in the Convention include the following groups of birds:

Gaviiformes	(Divers)
Podicipediformes	(Grebes)
Pelicaniformes	(Pelicans, Cormorants, Darters)
Ciconiiformes	(Herons, Bitterns, Storks, Ibises, Flamingos)
Anseriformes	(Screamers, Swans, Geese, Ducks)
Gruiformes	(Cranes)
Ralliformes	(Coots, Rails)
Charadriiformes	(Waders, Gulls, Terns)

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b) The entries in the List of Wetlands of International Importance which is to be maintained under the Convention could usefully be supplemented by descriptions of the biotopes involved and an enumeration of the bird species especially in need of protection therein.

20. The Conference adopted eleven Recommendations which are submitted to the Governments and other Bodies concerned for consideration and appropriate action.
Although in sympathy with the intention of Recommendations 1 to 5, Delegates from some countries refrained from voting on them for the formal reason that they did not wish to be involved in the internal affairs of the countries concerned. These Recommendations are appended as Annex II to this Final Act and relate to:
    1) Conservation of the Waddensea, northwestern Europe.
    2) Conservation of Thjorsarver, Iceland.
    3) Conservation of North Bull Island, Ireland.
    4) Conservation of Lakes Ab-i-Istada and Dasht-e-Nawar, Afghanistan.
    5) Conservation of the Medway Estuary, England.
    6) Oil Pollution.
    7) Pesticides.
    8) Promotion of Wetlands Research.
    9) Promotion of Hunting Research.
    10) African Wetlands.
    11) Wetlands and the Man and the Biosphere Programme.

In witness whereof, the Representatives have signed this Final Act.
Done at Ramsar this third day of February, One thousand nine hundred and seventy one, in a single copy in the English language.
The original text of this Final Act shall be deposited by the Government of Iran with the Director General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization who shall send a certified copy of this instrument to each of the Governments represented at the Conference.

(Signed by the President and Rapporteur-general, and Representatives of Denmark, Finland, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, India, Iran, Ireland, Jordan, the Netherlands, Pakistan, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and Great Britain.)

(Annex I)

Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, Especially as Waterfowl Habitat

Final Text Adopted
by the International Conference of Wetlands and Waterfowl at Ramsar, Iran,
on 2 February 1971

The Contracting Parties,
Recognizing the interdependence of Man and his environment;

Considering the fundamental ecological functions of wetlands as regulators of water regimes and as habitats supporting a characteristic flora and fauna especially waterfowl;

Being convinced that wetlands constitute a resource of great economic, cultural, scientific and recreational value, the loss of which would be irreparable;

Desiring to stem the progressive encroachment on and loss of wetlands now and in the future;

Recognizing that waterfowl in their seasonal migrations may transcend frontiers and so should be regarded as an international resource;

Being confident that the conservation of wetlands and their flora and fauna can be ensured by combining far-sighted national policies with co-ordinated international action;

Have agreed as follows:

Article 1

1. For the purpose of this Convention wetlands are areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres.
2. For the purpose of this Convention waterfowl are birds ecologically dependent on wetlands.

Article 2

1. Each Contracting Party shall designate suitable wetlands within its territory for inclusion in a List of Wetlands of International Importance, hereinafter referred to as "the List", which is maintained by the bureau established under Article 8. The boundaries of each wetland shall be precisely described and also delimited on a map and they may incorporate riparian and coastal zones adjacent to the wetlands, and islands or bodies of marine water deeper than six metres at low tide lying within the wetlands, especially where these have importance as waterfowl habitats.
2. Wetlands should be selected for the List on account of their international significance in terms of ecology, botany, zoology, limnology or hydrology. In the first instance wetlands of international importance to waterfowl at any season should be included.
3. The inclusion of a wetland in the List does not prejudice the exclusive sovereign rights of the Contracting Party in whose territory the wetland is situated.
4. Each Contracting Party shall designate at least one wetland to be included in the List when signing this Convention or when depositing its instrument of ratification or accession, as provided in Article 9.
5. Any Contracting Party shall have the right to add to the List further wetlands situated within its territory, to extend the boundaries of those wetlands already included by it in the List, or, because of its urgent national interests, to delete or restrict the boundaries of wetlands already included by it in the List and shall, at the earliest possible time, inform the organization or government responsible for the continuing bureau duties specified in Article 8 of any such changes.
6. Each Contracting Party shall consider its international responsibilities for the conservation, management and wise use of migratory stocks of waterfowl, both when designating entries for the List and when exercising its right to change entries in the List relating to wetlands within its territory.

Article 3

1. The Contracting Parties shall formulate and implement their planning so as to promote the conservation of the wetlands included in the List, and as far as possible the wise use of wetlands in their territory.
2. Each Contracting Party shall arrange to be informed at the earliest possible time if the ecological character of any wetland in its territory and included in the List has changed, is changing or is likely to change as the result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference. Information on such changes shall be passed without delay to the organization or government responsible for the continuing bureau duties specified in Article 8.

Article 4

1. Each Contracting Party shall promote the conservation of wetlands and waterfowl by establishing nature reserves on wetlands, whether they are included in the List or not, and provide adequately for their wardening.
2. Where a Contracting Party in its urgent national interest, deletes or restricts the boundaries of a wetland included in the List, it should as far as possible compensate for any loss of wetland resources, and in particular it should create additional nature reserves for waterfowl and for the protection, either in the same area or elsewhere, of an adequate portion of the original habitat.
3. The Contracting Parties shall encourage research and the exchange of data and publications regarding wetlands and their flora and fauna.
4. The Contracting Parties shall endeavour through management to increase waterfowl populations on appropriate wetlands.
5. The Contracting Parties shall promote the training of personnel competent in the fields of wetland research, management and wardening.

Article 5

The Contracting Parties shall consult with each other about implementing obligations arising from this Convention especially in the case of a wetland extending over the territories of more than one Contracting Party or where a water system is shared by Contracting Parties. They shall at the same time endeavour to co-ordinate and support present and future policies and regulations concerning the conservation of wetlands and their flora and fauna.

Article 6

1. The Contracting Parties shall, as the necessity arises, convene Conferences on the Conservation of Wetlands and Waterfowl.
2. These Conferences shall have an advisory character and shall be competent inter alia:
   a) to discuss the implementation of this Convention;
   b) to discuss additions to and changes in the List;
   c) to consider information regarding changes in the ecological character of wetlands included in the List provided in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Article 3;
   d) to make general or specific recommendations to the Contracting Parties regarding the conservation, management and wise use of wetlands and their flora and fauna;
   e) to request relevant international bodies to prepare reports and statistics on matters which are essentially international in character affecting wetlands.
3. The Contracting Parties shall ensure that those responsible at all levels for wetlands management shall be informed of, and take into consideration, recommendations of such Conferences concerning the conservation, management and wise use of wetlands and their flora and fauna.

Article 7

1. The representatives of the Contracting Parties at such Conferences should include persons who are experts on wetlands or waterfowl by reason of knowledge and experience gained in scientific, administrative or other appropriate capacities.
2. Each of the Contracting Parties represented at a Conference shall have one vote, recommendations being adopted by a simple majority of the votes cast, provided that not less than half the Contracting Parties cast votes.

Article 8

1. The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources shall perform the continuing bureau duties under this Convention until such time as another organization or government is appointed by a majority of two thirds of all Contracting Parties.
2. The continuing bureau duties shall be, inter alia:
   a) to assist in the convening and organizing of Conferences specified in Article 6;
   b) to maintain the List of Wetlands of International Importance and to be informed by the Contracting Parties of any additions, extensions, deletions or restrictions concerning wetlands included in the List provided in accordance with Paragraph 5 of Article 2;
   c) to be informed by the Contracting Parties of any changes in the ecological character of wetlands included in the List provided in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Article 3;
   d) to forward notification of any alterations to the List, or changes in character of wetlands included therein, to all Contracting Parties and to arrange for these matters to be discussed at the next Conference;
   e) to make known to the Contracting Party concerned, the recommendations of the Conferences in respect of such alterations to the List or of changes in the character of wetlands included therein.

Article 9

1. This Convention shall remain open for signature indefinitely.
2. Any member of the United Nations or of one of the Specialized Agencies or of the International Atomic Energy Agency or Party to the Statute of the International Court of Justice may become a party to this Convention by:
   a) signature without reservation as to ratification;
   b) signature subject to ratification followed by ratification;
   c) accession.
3. Ratification or accession shall be effected by the deposit of an instrument of ratification or accession with the Director General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, (hereinafter referred to as "the Depository").

Article 10

1. This Convention shall enter into force four months after seven States have become Parties to this Convention in accordance with Paragraph 2 of Article 9.
2. Thereafter this Convention shall enter into force for each Contracting Party four months after the day of its signature without reservation as to ratification, or its deposit of an instrument of ratification or accession.

Article 11

1. This Convention shall continue in force for an indefinite period.
2. Any Contracting Party may denounce this Convention after a period of five years from the date on which it entered into force for that Party by giving written notice thereof to the Depository. Denunciation shall take effect four months after the day on which notice thereof is received by the Depository.

Article 12

1. The Depository shall inform all States that have signed and acceded to this Convention as soon as possible of:
   a) signatures to this Convention;
   b) deposits of instruments of ratification of this Convention;
   c) deposits of instruments of accession to this Convention;
   d) the date of entry into force of this Convention;
   e) notifications of denunciation of this Convention.
2. When this Convention has entered into force, the Depository shall have it registered with the Secretariat of the United Nations in accordance with Article 102 of the Charter.

In witness whereof, the undersigned, being duly authorized to that effect, have signed this Convention.

Done at.....this..... day of..... 19...., in a single original in the English, French, German and Russian languages, in any case of divergency the English text prevailing, which shall be deposited with the Depository which shall send true copies thereof to all Contracting Parties.

(Annex II)

Recommendations Adopted by the International Conference on the Conservation of Wetlands and Waterfowl

at Ramsar, Iran, on 3 February 1971

Conservation of specific wetlands

Recommendation 1. Conservation of the Waddensea, northwestern Europe.

The Conference,

Considering that multi-disciplinary international research in recent years has shown convincingly the unrivalled value of the Waddensea as a natural resource; because of its high biological productivity and its geographical situation it is of vital importance for literally millions of Eurasian waterfowl;

Recognizing that this area in the territories of Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany and the Netherlands is threatened by development plans involving the construction of dams and dykes, the establishment of industries and other human impacts which are altering the present ecological situation;

Being especially aware of the immediate danger of pollution by industrial waste and sewage waters;

Recommends to the Governments of Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany and the Netherlands that action be taken to halt the implementation of any such planning until appropriate research has demonstrated that no harmful effects will result,

and further recommends that consideration be given to including the Waddensea area in the List of Wetlands of International Importance to be established under the proposed Wetlands Convention.

Recommendation 2. Conservation of Thjorsarver, Iceland.

The Conference,

Being informed of the international importance of the Thjorsarver area in central Iceland as the breeding ground of more than half the world population of *Anser brachyrhynchus;*

Being aware of the valuable ecological research being started in the area;

Recommends to the Government of Iceland that it delay the proposal to flood Thjorsarver for hydro-electric purposes until the results of research permit a re-evaluation of resources allocation in this area.

Recommendation 3. Conservation of North Bull Island, Ireland.

The Conference,

Noting that development has commenced of North Bull Island near Dublin, a vitally important waterfowl habitat;

Considering that it ranks fourth in importance among Ireland's list of wetlands, is the winter habitat of many thousands of waterfowl, and moreover is the only wetland of international significance within a capital city in Europe;

Being deeply concerned at the development of this area;

Recommends to the Government of Ireland that this wetland should be excluded from further development.

Recommendation 4. Conservation of Lakes Ab-i-Istada and Dasht-e-Nawar, Afghanistan.

The Conference,

Being advised that recent studies of wetlands in Afghanistan have shown that Lakes Ab-i-Istada and Dasht-e-Nawar are of great international importance as wintering and breeding places for waterfowl including for varying periods the greater part of the world population of the Siberian Crane *Grus leucogeranus*;

Recommends to the Government of Afghanistan that these valuable wetlands be given protection from distrubance at all times, and suggests that they seek financial or other assistance from international organizations if this is required.

Recommendation 5. Conservation of the Medway Estuary, England.

The Conference,

Noting that it is proposed that the Medway Estuary in Kent, England, be considered for development as a maritime industrial development area (MIDA);

Taking into consideration that the area is of outstanding international importance to migratory waterfowl and could well become critically important as a wintering ground for part of the fifth of the world population of the darkbellied race of the Brent groose, *Branta bernicla,* that would be displaced if Foulness became the site for London's third airport or a "Europort" dock complex;

Recommends that the United Kingdom Government exclude this vitally important area from such development projects.

POLLUTION

Recommendation 6. Oil Pollution

The Conference,

Noting with anxiety the accelerated frequency of oil pollution of the sea by dessaters and by oil discharge from ships which do not respect the International Convention for the Prevention of the Pollution of the Sea by Oil;

Recommends to the appropriate States and International Organizations that they bring to the attention of competent authorities the primary importance of:

a) Ensuring strict supervision on coastal waters, especially in the Caspian Sea, the Baltic Sea, the Kattegat, the North Sea and the Channel;
b) Accelerating research into combatting oil pollution; and
c) applying promptly and rigorously the statutory punishments.

Recommendation 7. Pesticides.

The Conference,

Noting with concern the grave danger to wetlands and their flora and fauna represented by the use of persistent pesticides, such as chlorinated hydrocarbons, due to run off, discharge of waste products and deliberate application;

Deploring an apparent tendency for such pesticides although often banned or restricted in the countries of manufacture, to be exported in quantity and even offered for sale at reduced prices to less developed countries, which may lead to the degradation of natural areas including wetlands of international importance;

Recommends that governments both of countries from which such pesticides originate and of those in which their use is not yet fully controlled take all necessary measures to curtail and, wherever possible, ban or severely restrict the sale and use of persistent pesticides.

RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATION

Recommendation 8. Promotion of wetlands research.

The Conference,

Being aware of the serious and deteriorating situation facing waterfowl in many parts of the Palaearctic Region;

Realizing the need for improving scientific information for the correct assessment of wetlands for the proposed Wetlands Convention;

Recommends that Governments and all appropriate departments and institutions concerned with natural resources should assist and facilitate wetland research at all levels, and in particular:

a) that all countries which do not already carry out regular waterfowl counts on important wetlands should endeavour to do so at least twice a year on dates advised by The International Wildfowl Research Bureau;
b) that all countries should assess their wetlands in respect of the need to provide a chain of effective refuges, these being selected for their value for waterfowl as well as permanence despite varying conditions of rainfall in arid areas; and
c) that if countries are unable to undertake this work from their own resources they should seek assistance from appropriate international organizations.

Recommendation 9. Promotion of Hunting Research

The Conference,

Recommends that waterfowl research organizations in different countries should undertake:

a) to make every effort to obtain data on the breeding success and productivity of the main species involved;
b) to produce general mortality data based on recovery of ringed birds to be compared with other measures of productivity; and
c) to carry out special studies on the effect of hunting on wildfowl populations, by means of ringing data and the use and development of realistic hunting kill or capture statistics.

and further recommends that international and national hunters' organizations should:

a) encourage sportsmanlike methods in hunting, and stop actions which obviously lead to mass destruction or loss of waterfowl;
b) intensify educational measures to improve hunters' knowledge of different species of waterfowl; and
c) make hunters aware of their responsibilities for conservation and wise use of waterfowl resources through proper hunting practices.

Recommendation 10. African Wetlands.

The Conference,

Noting with satisfaction, that the new African Convention on Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, in force since 1969, deals specifically with wetlands as a productive natural resource and obliges the Contracting States to undertake ecologically sound measures for the conservation, management and utilization of wetlands;

Taking into consideration the importance of African wetlands as habitats for migratory waterfowl breeding in northern and central Eurasia, but wintering in Africa;

Recommends that African Governments encourage research on productivity of wetlands and, possibly with the help of UNESCO, establish an African List of wetlands of international importance, especially as waterfowl habitat, in conformity with the Project MAR list for Europe, published in 1965 by the IUCN.

Recommendation 11. Wetlands and the Man and the Biosphere

The Conference,

Noting with satisfaction UNESCO's new programme on "Man and the Biosphere" (MAB) involving the planning of world-wide research into, and the monitoring of, the role and productivity of various ecosystems or major habitats, as a basis for conservation, management, wise utilization and sustained yield;

Recommends that wetlands in all parts of the world should be brought within the scope of the MAB programme.